

Backup **EXPOSED!**

Backing up your data is essential, so it's vital that the software you use for the job works properly. Yet as Ben Pitt discovered, not all backup software is as reliable as it should be

If there's one thing more tedious than backing up, it's working out the best backup software to use. As a result, many people don't bother. But hard disks don't last forever, and you're tempting fate by not performing regular backups.

The best backup software makes safeguarding your files a doddle – not just from hard disk failures, but also from virus attacks and accidents. The software in this test makes it possible to recover files in the face of complete data loss, and also allows older versions of files to be recovered. However, while some packages make this easy, others make it extremely difficult.

BACKING A WINNER

You could back up files simply by copying them to another storage device manually, but the point of backup software is that it makes the process more flexible and less hassle. A basic requirement is the ability to set a schedule for automated backups. All the software here can be set to back up files on a daily or weekly basis, but some can be set to run every hour, at startup or before an application is installed. We particularly like those that can back up on shutdown or when the computer is idle.

A full backup of all your files can take some time, so backup software offers ways to speed up the process. Differential backups only copy the files that are new or updated since the first full backup, while incremental backups copy only new or updated files since the

previous backup. Both techniques result in lots of smaller backup archives, but can also allow recovery of different versions of one file. Differential and incremental backups are harder to restore than a full backup, but these difficulties shouldn't be passed on to the user – sadly, this is not always the case.

Backing up open files is tricky, too, and most but not all software can do it. Only some packages can back up files from and to storage locations on your network, and some can back up to FTP servers (online storage space commonly used for hosting websites). See the table on page 124 for a breakdown of specific features.

Backing up is boring. But if your software can make it feel effortless, you're more likely to use it effectively.

WINDOWS BACKUP

One option is Windows' built-in backup utility. This is already installed with Windows XP Professional Edition (in the Start menu, Programs, Accessories, System Tools), but Windows XP Home users will need to install it from the Windows installation disc (see <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/302894> for details).

However, we wouldn't recommend it. Although reasonably well featured with support for network and tape drives, we found it awkward. It demanded a password for our Windows user account even though we didn't have one, and requested a new tape when we had selected a hard disk as our backup destination. It's worth paying for better features and ease of use.

Back of the net Online backup

Backing up to DVD or external hard disk protects files from corruption or disk failure, but in the event of fire or theft you still stand to lose everything. That's why the safest forms of backup are offsite – backing up to a drive in different building.

This is possible using software that supports backup to FTP servers, but you'll need to rent FTP space from a hosting company. This is often just as expensive as dedicated online backup services, which include online storage space and backup software with which to access it.

Two gigabytes of online storage space from Mozy (www.mozy.com) is free, while companies such as iBackup (www.ibackup.com) charge \$15 (around £7.80) per month for 5GB of storage with the promise of advanced features.

We tried Carbonite (www.carbonite.com), which costs \$50 (around £26) per year for unlimited storage. It won't back up external hard disks, more than one PC, application and system files or any single file over 2GB. We found that backup transfers ran at about 0.8MB per minute. This means that initial backups can take days, but as long as you're not creating or modifying vast amounts of data on a regular basis, the subsequent incremental backups should be fairly painless.

Carbonite is delightfully easy, with spoken-word instructions, sensible default settings and tight integration with My Computer. To back up a file or folder, you simply right-click it and select Back this

up. From then on, the software tracks any changes and uploads new and updated files as soon as it can, without disrupting other online activities.

It's extremely convenient, and arguably more reliable than backing up to a local drive. However, old versions of files aren't available for restoration, although deleted files are kept for 30 days. Restores are much slower than from a local storage device; Carbonite claims that 500MB to 700MB per hour is typical. Other online companies offer the ability to keep old versions and to receive a DVD in the post for faster restores. The unavoidable limitation is the speed of uploads, but online backup is a sensible extra precaution for your most important files, leaving full backups to conventional software.



▲ Carbonite combines offsite backups with childlike simplicity of operation

SOFTWARE LABS

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ACRONIS True Image 10 Home

★★★★★
£23 inc VAT

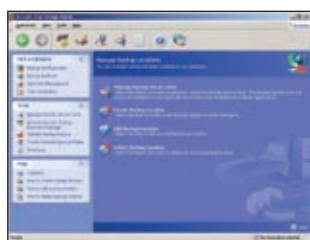


True Image is a well-established disk-imaging program, with version 10 adding comprehensive

file and application backup features. Archive destinations include network locations, FTP servers and hidden hard disk partitions. Backups can be triggered on shutdown and missed scheduled backups are performed when you next switch on.

Outlook and Outlook Express data is saved by profile or even by individual folder such as Contacts or Inbox, although you can't restore a single folder from a complete Outlook backup archive. There are short cuts for over 100 other applications, including Office, Internet Explorer and Photoshop, but the most recent versions aren't always supported.

Key tasks such as defining and editing backup jobs and restoring files from different dates are easy to carry out, but certain other features could be better. Backup jobs are forgotten if you choose to run them manually rather than add them to the scheduler. Options to back up your data, application settings and email profiles can't be combined unless you choose the disk image mode. To recover files, you must locate the backup files manually. Still, recovering incremental backups and older versions of files is simple, and True Image is one of the friendliest programs here.



▲ True Image combines ease of use with a comprehensive list of features

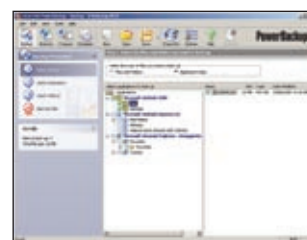
SUMMARY

- ✓ Comprehensive options
- ✓ Generally easy to use
- ✗ Some features could be neater

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 175MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk
DETAILS www.acronis.com

CYBERLINK PowerBackup 2.5

★★★
£26 inc VAT



▲ PowerBackup supports Blu-ray optical media

PowerBackup is one of the few programs in this test to support Blu-ray optical media. With capacities of 25GB and 50GB, Blu-ray may seem an ideal medium for backups. However, rewritable single-layer discs cost around £15, which is more per megabyte than external hard disks – and that's before you budget for a Blu-ray drive.

PowerBackup is also unusual in this test in its inability to back up open files. The interface looks friendly and is easy to follow, but multiple jobs are obscured by an awkward file system. At least the software is sensible enough not to overwrite existing backup data if you forget to change the name of the output file. Options are available to back up Internet Explorer, Outlook Express and Outlook data, and although Internet Explorer 7 isn't supported it still managed to back up our Favorites and Cookies.

Restoring a particular file from an incremental backup archive is a pain, as you'll need to work out on which day the last version was saved. Complete restores from incremental backups were easy to achieve once we had worked out that all the relevant restore points must be selected simultaneously, but this is far from intuitive.

PowerBackup's inability to back up open files puts it at a disadvantage, and there's nothing much to make up for it in its other features.

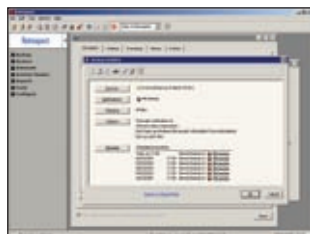
SUMMARY

- ✓ Reasonably straightforward
- ✗ Can't back up open files
- ✗ Long-winded single-file restoration

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows Me/2000/XP, Pentium processor, 64MB RAM, 10MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.cyberlink.com
DETAILS www.cyberlink.com

EMC INSIGNIA Retrospect Professional 7.5

★★★★★
£70 inc VAT



▲ Retrospect Professional uses its available storage space wisely

Retrospect is available in versions for a single PC right up to multiple servers. This version – the most affordable one currently available in the UK – runs on one PC and can back up two others across a network.

It's particularly adept at backing up to removable media, using different disks for different days of the week. When backing up to high-capacity media such as a hard disk, it's possible to select a complex but well-conceived rule for managing the available space: it will keep an archive for every day in the last week, each week in the past month and one a month for previous months. Alternatively, it will keep a set number of backups or simply ask for a new location when full.

Retrospect presents its features in a businesslike manner but, although it's an efficient system, its idiosyncrasies are likely to baffle the average home user. Editing an existing schedule is particularly awkward. Even the Explorer view is arcane, with a non-standard way of navigating through folders. Restoration could be simpler, too, but we like the search facility for finding old versions of a particular file.

Retrospect Professional has some powerful features, but unless you anticipate upgrading to server-level backup at a later date, there's little point in grappling with its complex interface when much friendlier software is available.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Many ways to keep old backups
- ✓ Can be upgraded for large networks
- ✗ Expensive

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98 SE/Me/2000/XP/Vista, 1.5GHz processor, 256MB RAM (512MB recommended), 1GB disk space
SUPPLIER www.emcinsignia.com
DETAILS www.emcinsignia.com

GENIE Backup Manager Home 7.0

★★★★★
\$50 (around £26)



▲ Backup Manager makes it easy to use its comprehensive facilities

Genie Backup Manager is one of the most comprehensive programs in this test. It backs up to and from network locations and to FTP servers, and integrates with Genie's (expensive) online backup service. Zip compression is available to make archives accessible directly from Windows, but you can also choose 128-bit encryption for more secure backups.

Backup Manager's best feature is its ability to back up a wide range of application settings. Outlook, Outlook Express, Internet Explorer, fonts, the Registry and various other settings can be backed up using simple tick boxes, and the list can be expanded using optional plug-ins available online. It took only two mouse clicks to find and install a plug-in for backing up iTunes 7 settings.

The software behaved impeccably in our tests but it could be a little friendlier. Non-standard terminology pops up and the Help files include some clumsy English. Schedules are defined in Backup Manager and sent to Windows Scheduled Tasks, but Backup Manager still keeps track of what's scheduled and includes links for editing them. Our preferred option – to back up when the PC is idle for a specified period – isn't available when defining a schedule, but you can choose it once it has been sent to Windows Scheduled Tasks.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Comprehensive application backup
- ✓ Robust, straightforward operation
- ✗ Interface is a little clumsy in places

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista
SUPPLIER www.genie-soft.com
DETAILS www.genie-soft.com

NOVASTOR NovaBackup Professional 7.5



\$50 (around £26)

NovaBackup's highlights include hourly schedules and the ability to back up disk partitions and recover them using a bootable CD.

However, there are a number of design flaws that make it a pain to use.

Running an incremental backup for the first time just saved a load of empty folders – instead, we had to run a full backup, then switch to incremental backup mode. However, this wasn't possible using NovaBackup's wizard interface, leaving us to create a new incremental backup from scratch. A Schedule screen allowed us to edit schedules but no other options of a backup job. Conversely, the Backup screen let us edit a job's file settings but not its schedule. It's possible to create a new schedule from the Backup screen, but this results in two schedules.

Worst of all is incremental backup restoration. The only way to do this is to restore the original full backup, then go through every additional backup point and restore them one by one. This could take hours of drudgery. To restore a specific file, we had to locate the exact backup point at which it was saved manually, which is more drudgery. An Overwrite Backups option combines incremental backups into a single archive for faster retrieval, but this means that older versions of files aren't retained, and editing jobs created in this mode caused data loss.



▲ NovaBackup's interface makes it difficult to master

SUMMARY

- ✓ Hourly schedule available
- ✗ Poor backup restoration
- ✗ Awkward to use

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 100MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.novastor.com
DETAILS www.novastor.com

NTI Backup Now! 4.5



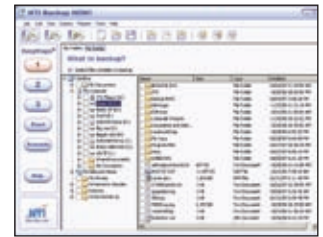
\$60 (around £31)

Backup Now! looks extremely friendly, with a colour scheme that is reminiscent of a Mothercare catalogue. Tick boxes are provided for backing up Outlook and Outlook Express profiles, the Windows Address Book, My Documents, the Desktop, Favorites and Fonts folders.

Destination options include network storage, FTP servers and Blu-ray drives, and descriptions are given for full, differential and incremental backups. However, you'll need to perform a full backup before choosing differential or incremental modes. It can't back up open files and doesn't draw the resulting errors to the user's attention. Managing more than one backup job is awkward as it involves manually opening and saving job files. We – and the software – were prone to forgetting where they were saved.

We spent some time trying to work out how to view existing schedules and eventually found them in a separate utility running in the System Tray. These can only be suspended or deleted and not edited in any way.

Restoring files was particularly bad. The software's elegant short cuts for backing up user profiles aren't mirrored in the Restore wizard, so you'll need to make sense of complex file structures without assistance. Worst of all, restoring incremental backups involved systematically going through each backup point to perform a full restore or find a file.



▲ Backup Now! looks friendly but isn't particularly easy to use

SUMMARY

- ✓ Friendly appearance
- ✗ Awkward and time-consuming
- ✗ Can't back up open files

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98/Me/2000/XP, Pentium processor, 64MB RAM, 35MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.ntibackupnow.com
DETAILS www.ntibackupnow.com

ROXIO Backup MyPC 2006 Deluxe



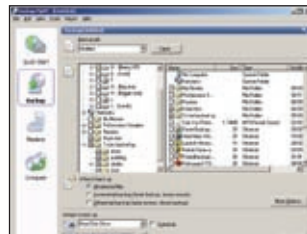
£17 inc VAT

Backup MyPC is available from both Roxio and Orlogix, and is included in Roxio's excellent Easy Media Creator 9 Suite (reviewed in *What's New*, *Shopper* January 2007). It looks friendly but has a slim set of features. Encryption isn't available and no warning is given after a backup has been missed. There are no options to back up application settings such as Outlook Express files so you'll need to locate these files yourself.

Backups can be scheduled daily, on days of the week or monthly, but at first we couldn't find any way to view existing schedules. We eventually found them in Windows Scheduled Tasks folder, but the software didn't give us any clues.

When running backups manually, the software asked for a new name for the backup archive to avoid overwriting existing data. However, for scheduled incremental backups, the software happily wiped our existing backup data without any warning. This meant that not only could we not recover old versions of some files, but we couldn't recover any version of many of our files. The demo we downloaded from Orlogix had an option to append rather than overwrite archives, but this was greyed out in Roxio's version.

Backup MyPC is lacking in key features and still manages to be awkward to use. The fact that it deletes backup files without asking means it's a complete disaster zone.



▲ There's not much to recommend in Backup MyPC

SUMMARY

- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✗ Backup files deleted surreptitiously
- ✗ Basic features

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000 (SP4)/XP (SP1), 300MHz Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 50MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.321db.co.uk
DETAILS www.roxio.co.uk

SYMANTEC Norton Save and Restore



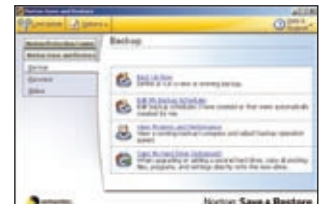
£40 inc VAT

Save and Restore is built on Norton Ghost (reviewed in *Labs*, *Shopper* October 2006), Symantec's excellent disk-imaging software. For a couple of pounds more, Save and Restore adds the ability to back up specific folders or certain types of files such as Pictures or Productivity files. Short cuts are provided for My Documents, the Desktop folder and Favorites, but not for email software files or application settings. It was the only program on test to refuse to back up files located on another PC on our network, but it was happy to save backup archives there.

The interface is smart and extremely easy to use. Jobs can be scheduled as frequently as hourly or triggered at log in, each time an application is installed or when a specified amount of data is created. Missed backups go unreported, though.

An option called Show Versions is available from My Computer's right-click menu, which produces a list of all the versions of a file that are available to restore. Alternatively, individual files can be recovered via a search facility. This works for folders, too, but selecting them is clumsy. There's no simple way to restore an entire file backup set.

It's useful to have disk imaging and file backup in a single application, enabling hourly backups for critical documents and less frequent disk images. However, True Image 10 costs less and includes more features.



▲ Save and Restore is convenient for recovering previous file versions

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy recovery of old file versions
- ✓ Built in disk-imaging tools
- ✗ Recovers individual folders clumsily

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP, 300MHz processor, 256MB RAM (384MB recommended), 126MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk
DETAILS www.symantec.com

VISIONWORKS Vision Backup Pro 10

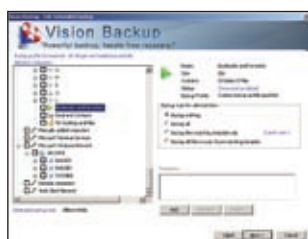
★★★

£38 (no VAT)

Vision Backup is available in various guises, but even the relatively affordable Pro version includes the ability to back up to a remote server via FTP and to and from other computers on a network. Open files are backed up, but missed scheduled backups aren't reported.

The home screen looks a little busy, with 10 options to choose between, but the wizards used to carry out tasks are generally straightforward despite their sombre appearance. There are short cuts for Favorites, the Desktop, My Documents and a wide range of email client software. Access to networked computers is nicely implemented, with the ability to back up email profiles on other PCs, but open files on other computers can't be accessed without additional software. It's easy to edit existing schedules and other settings without getting into a pickle.

Restoring old versions of files from an incremental backup job was straightforward; we simply selected the relevant archive and ticked the files we wanted. Attempting to retrieve all files to their most recent point seemed simple, too, but we discovered that older versions of some files were recovered incorrectly. We queried this with VisionWorks, and within 36 hours an updated version of the software fixed the problem. However, this throws other parts of the software's reliability into question. We would be hesitant to use backup software from a company that passes faulty software through beta testing.



▲ Vision Backup Pro provides you with plenty of backup options

SUMMARY

- ✓ Good range of backup destinations
- ✗ Expensive
- ✗ Questionable reliability

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows NT4/2000/XP/Vista, Pentium processor, 64MB RAM, 30MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.vwsolutions.com
DETAILS www.vwsolutions.com

Labs verdict Backup software

Backing up is serious business, so we were alarmed to discover that a couple of applications included in this test were prone to errors. Roxio's Backup MyPC failed to make reliable scheduled incremental backups, and these are the most useful kind in our opinion. VisionWorks' Vision Backup Pro suffered faults when attempting to restore from an incremental backup set, and although the problem was quickly fixed once we reported it, our confidence in the software was diminished. Novastor's and NTI's software were reliable but we found using them to be long-winded and awkward. CyberLink's PowerBackup was better, but it failed to stand out from the rest. EMC Insignia's Retrospect Professional's business-oriented interface and features were impressive but felt out of place in software designed for a single PC or small network.

Of the remaining three, Genie's Backup Manager Home offered the best collection of features, with built-in or optional support for every type of destination media and the ability to back up settings from a huge range of applications. Its only notable omission is disk imaging, although it could be easier to use, too.

Symantec's Norton Save and Restore and Acronis' True Image 10 Home are both built on well-established disk-imaging software, which is a valuable ally for conventional backup software. Both stand head and shoulders above the competition for ease of use, although Norton's software is better.

However, it's Acronis' extra features – including backup from network locations and to FTP servers, short cuts for application settings and the ability to schedule backups to run at shutdown (rather than Norton's log off but not shutdown) – that make it our top choice. It's extremely well priced, too. ☑



ACRONIS True Image 10 Home

★★★★★



	BEST BUY								
MANUFACTURER	ACRONIS	CYBERLINK	EMC INSIGNIA	GENIE	NOVASTOR	NTI	ROXIO	SYMANTEC	VISIONWORKS
Product	True Image 10 Home	PowerBackup 2.5	Retrospect Professional 7.5	Backup Manager Home 7.0	NovaBackup Professional 7.5	Backup NOW! 4.5	Backup MyPC 2006 Deluxe	Norton Save and Restore	Vision Backup Pro 10
Rating	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★	★	★★★★★	★★
Operating systems	Windows 2000/XP/Vista	Windows Me/2000/XP	Windows 98 SE/Me/2000/XP/Vista	Windows 2000/XP/Vista	Windows 2000/XP/Vista	Windows 98/Me/2000/XP	Windows 2000 (SP4)/XP (SP1)	Windows XP	Windows NT4/2000/XP/Vista
DESTINATION MEDIA									
Internal/external hard disk, CD, DVD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Blu-ray	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Network locations	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Remote server (FTP)	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Tape drive	No	No	Yes	Pro version (\$70)	Yes	No	No	No	Server version (\$125)
Online	No	No	No	Option	No	No	No	No	No
FEATURES									
Back up disk partitions	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Back up from network locations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Back up open files	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Schedule options	Daily, weekdays, weekly, monthly, on boot, on shutdown	Days of the week, monthly	Days of the week	Days of the week, monthly, at logon, at startup, when idle	Hourly, daily, weekly, monthly	Daily, weekly, monthly	Days of the week, monthly, at logon, at startup, when idle	Hourly, days of the week, before installations, at logon/off, after data added to drive	Days of the week, months of the year, at logon, at startup
Catches up on missed schedule	Yes	Yes	Yes	Notification	Notification	Notification	No	No	No
One-step incremental restore	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Faulty	Yes	Yes
BUYING INFORMATION									
Price	£23 inc VAT	£26 inc VAT	£70 inc VAT	\$50 (around £26)	\$50 (around £26)	\$60 (around £31)	£17 inc VAT	£40 inc VAT	£38 (no VAT)
Supplier	www.amazon.co.uk	www.cyberlink.com	www.emcinsignia.com	www.genie-soft.com	www.novastor.com	www.ntibackupnow.com	www.321db.co.uk	www.amazon.co.uk	www.vwsolutions.com
Details	www.acronis.com	www.cyberlink.com	www.emcinsignia.com	www.genie-soft.com	www.novastor.com	www.ntibackupnow.com	www.roxio.co.uk	www.symantec.com	www.vwsolutions.com